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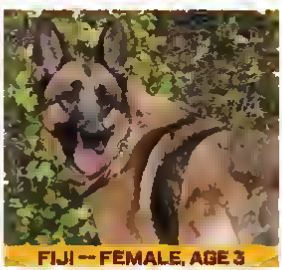
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ORANGE COUNTY PEOPLE 2019

INTRO 7
By Matt Coker
MATT FERNER 9
By R. Scott Moxley
DINA GILIO-WHITAKER 10
By Lisa Black
RASHAD AL-DARRAGH 11
By Lauren Galvan
PRIYA SHAH 13
By Gabriel San Román
EDWIN AMENTA 15
By Matt Coker
ALLISON CUFF 17
By Lila Shakti
GIL RAMIREZ 19
By Patrice Marsters
MARILYNN M ONTAÑO 20
By Aimee Murillo
JOHN HAMPTON 22
By Nate Jackson
RIFF COOPER 23
By Steve Donofrio
NICHOLE WEST 34
By Jefferson VanBilliard

also

24 | CALENDAR | Things to do while you contemplate doing more good
27 | SPECIAL SCREENINGS | Compiled by Matt Coker
28 | SAVAGE LOVE | By Dan Savage
31 | TOKE OF THE WEEK | Farm's Pax Era Sweet & Sour DG Live Resin Pod
By Jefferson VanBilliard

on the cover

Photo illustration and design by Michael Ziobrowski

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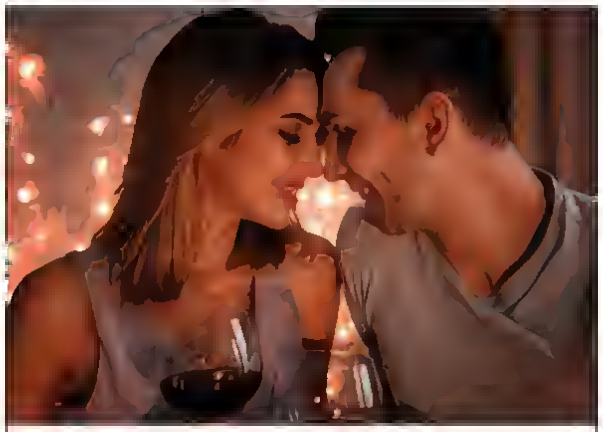

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PRIDE WEEK 6/15-6/23

PUBLISHES 6/13/19

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ORANGE COUNTY'S LEADING SOURCE OF NEWS, CULTURE, AND ENTERTAINMENT

ORANGE COUNTY PEOPLE 2019

When *OC Weekly* is not busy applying our journo stick to the backsides of various reprobates, we pause to think about the good people all around us. For instance, there are the folks gracing the cover and sprinkled individually throughout this issue. Whether they are feeding the hungry, feeding our brains or feeding our ears, these are the ones who join countless others in making Orange County a special place to be. Sometimes. When those reprobates aren't running amok.

Among the un-reprobates featured in this year's People Issue are fighters for trans youths, Arab Americans and easy access to cannabis. There are also protectors of *D&D*, baseball, spoken word, the needy, musicians and the OC music scene, and the sacred remains and descendants of this land's first peoples. And to show we are not afraid to highlight a worthy opponent when we see one, we included a journo who beat this infernal rag on news stories. (*Gulp!*)

—MATT COKER

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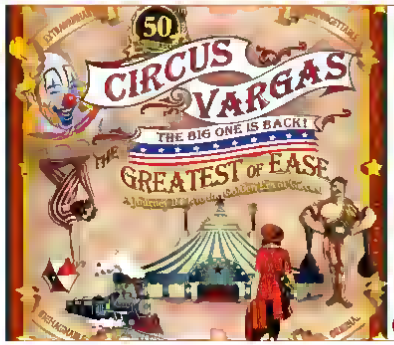

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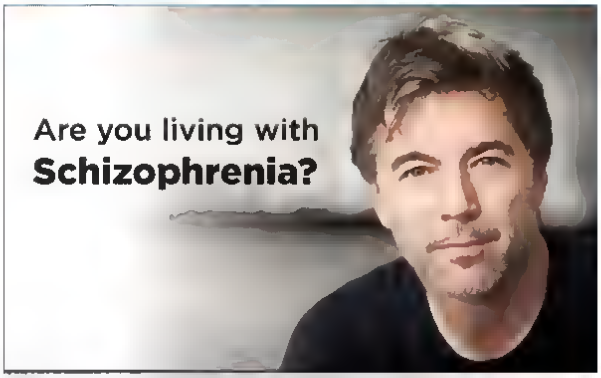

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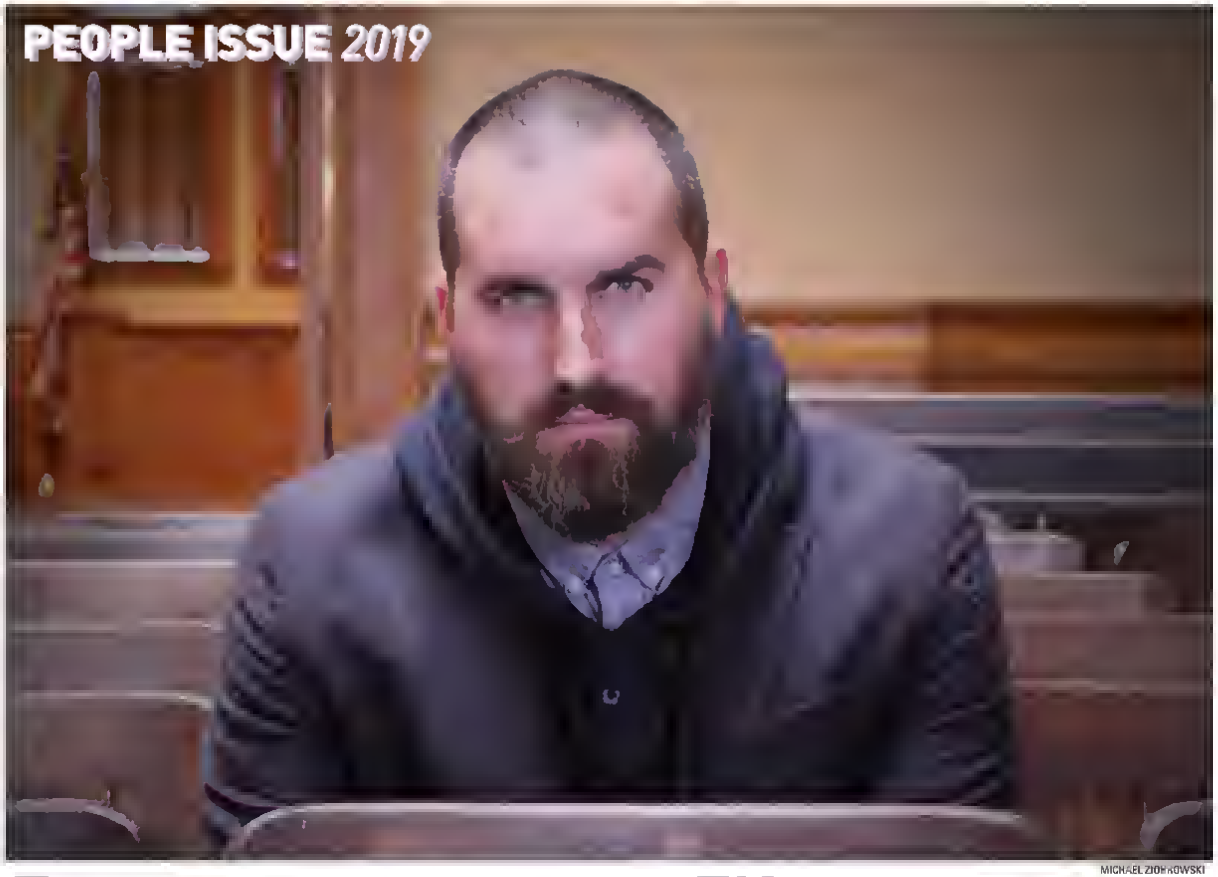

MICHAEL ZIOMKOWSKI

THE JOURNALIST CITIZEN

MATT FERNER

BY R. SCOTT MOXLEY

A prominent criminal-justice-reform advocate and journalist, Matt Ferner graduated in 1995 from Corona del Mar High School, an institution that has educated members of the nation's wealthiest families. But Ferner wasn't a chauffeured, trust-fund brat who had access to his parents' yachts, jets and limitless credit cards. He grew up a skateboard enthusiast in a working-class family uplifted by the presence of a grandmother and mom who not only gave him unconditional love, but also showed him the value of compassion, curiosity and a commitment to truthfulness.

Excuse me while I channel my inner, snivelng Sean Hannity . . . Can Ferner be portrayed as a loon? After all, he spent years working as one of my younger courthouse competitors while a national correspondent with the Huffington Post. We've repeatedly raced each other to obtain exclusive information. He's beaten me on stories, I've trumped him, too. With that angle disclosed, any Hannity-esque smear job won't work.

The slender, 6-foot-6 Ferner is an accomplished reporter and one of my most decent journalism colleagues. Though then based out of a Beverly Hills news organization's headquarters when Orange County's notorious jailhouse-snitch scandal began percolating, Ferner advised his bosses that this local scandal had national criminal-justice-system implications. Thankfully, they—in particular veteran investigative journalist Ryan Grim, who is now with TheIntercept.com—agreed.

Ferner, 41, says covering Southern California's notorious informant scandal stunned him after he'd arrived on the scene in early 2015 to watch *People v Scott Dekraai*, ground zero in the controversy. He'd covered police misconduct but hadn't fully comprehended the extent of systemic corruption that taints an entire police agency such as the Orange County Sheriff's Department.

"I couldn't believe that so many deputies could get away with lying," he says, adding, "And they have badges and guns—and they are the administrators of our justice system. To this day, it has shaken me."

Other troubling stories shaped Ferner's views. He witnessed Los Angeles Police Department cops fabricate a reason for killing an unarmed Ezell Ford as he walked on a sidewalk in August 2014. Eyewitnesses told Ferner the cops had no legitimate reason to take Ford's life and had falsely portrayed him as a gang member in hopes of justifying the homicide. "So, I wrote the story, and it just exploded," Ferner recalls.

In 2017, he obtained reports and photographs depicting how Dade County, Florida, jail deputies placed mentally ill inmate Darren Rainey in a torture room, subjected him to scalding-hot water for hours and left him dead like "a boiled lobster."

"They literally cooked him," Ferner says. "None of those deputies was punished. Those kinds of stories changed my life."

Happily married with two kids and living in Aliso Viejo, he decided last November to leave daily reporting after a decade with the Post to become director of media strategy at the Justice Collaborative, a national nonprofit group aiming to combat criminal-justice-system inequities. "I'm super-excited," Ferner says. "I want to be part of a movement that stops mass incarceration and the kind of violence used on Ford and Rainey."

RSCOTTMOXLEY@OCWEEKLY.COM

MICHAEL ZIDHOWSKI

DECOLONIZING SURFER

DINA GILIO-WHITAKER

BY LISA BLACK

Surfer, scholar, author, activist and teacher Dina Gilio-Whitaker (Colville Confederated Tribes) brings her indefatigable energy to telling the full story of surfing and indigenous people, particularly how these unfolding narratives intertwine to affect everyone on the planet.

Peeling away colonial settlers' version of events was at the forefront of the San Clemente resident's work last month, with the release of her latest book, *As Long as Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice From Colonization to Standing Rock*, and a panel organized for the Impact Zones and Liminal Spaces conference called "Killing Your White Male Buzz: Women of Color Feminizing, Diversifying, and Decolonizing Surfing."

The power and playfulness of her words contain an unassailable command of the past, and most crucially, the biases she uncovers dominate events in today's ramped-up battle to curtail Big Oil. "From an American Indian perspective, we're all on the reservation now," she writes in the introduction to *As Long as Grass Grows*.

"I'm not just talking about the history and native's people's place on the land," clarifies Gilio-Whitaker, who is equally as poised whether speaking of genocide or friendships, "but about the knowledge they have, inherent indigenous knowledge that's connected to the land that we all need to benefit from in order to guarantee all our future. … What humankind finds important, that's what has to change."

She shares that wisdom at Cal State San Marcos, where she teaches the 4 R's, the central traits "in all native cultures relationality, reciprocity, responsibility and respect."

The foundational concept of relationality developed in Gilio-Whitaker's worldview with each of her life's reinventions. Growing up in LA as an "urban Indian," she bodysurfed and used scratchy Styrofoam boards. "We rode those things all day until our skin bled," she recalls.

A romance led her to Oahu's North Shore in 1980. "I immersed myself in surfing Pipeline," Gilio-Whitaker says. "I was just drawn to it; I was crazy. I always had high standards for myself, and a high standard in that context was surfing Pipeline."

After the collapse of a second relationship, she returned to California. "I reconnected to my tribe [Sinixt, known as the Arrow Lakes People in English] and just sunk myself into my native identity," she says.

For the next couple of decades, she didn't surf at all. "[My life] became much more culture-centered, and then led me back into school." While working on her master's in New Mexico, the man she'd broken up with 26 years earlier reached out. "We reconnected, we got married."

Gilio-Whitaker joined her spouse at his home in San Clemente during the "Save Trestles" campaign. Swept up, she wrote her thesis on how protecting Panhe, the 9,600-year-old village of the Acjachemen people that's situated above the famous surf break, influenced the Coastal Commission in denying the toll-road expansion.

Though she has often taken students to visit and has written about Panhe, she isn't Acjachemen. "Even though I'm native, I'm not indigenous to this place," she says, explaining her current research. "How do we as people not indigenous to a place develop a land and place-based ethic that honors indigenous history and local ecology?"

In addition to serving as policy director and senior researcher at the Center for World Indigenous Studies, she also volunteers with such nonprofits as the San Onofre Parks Foundation, the Institute for Women Surfers and Native Like Water, which includes surfing in youth academic and leadership enrichment. "Their now-existing reservations are inland," the standup paddleboarder explains, "but they were for millennia an ocean-based people."

And somehow she finds time to get herself in the water. "I'm a local down there at San-O," she says, "in the SUP community."

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MICHAEL ZIOBROWSKI

THE ORGANIZER

RASHAD AL-DABBAGH

BY LAUREN GALVAN

From making sure the youth of today is politically active to protesting alongside the tribes at Standing Rock, Rashad Al-Dabbagh is here to make an impact.

Al-Dabbagh founded the Arab American Civic Council in Anaheim, home to the treasure known as Little Arabia, in 2011 and serves as its executive director. "There was and is a need for an organization that speaks and fights for Arab American needs," Al-Dabbagh says.

During the election cycles, Al-Dabbagh and others from the Arab American Civic Council canvass the streets, and in 2016, they launched a Rock the Vote campaign aimed at the local Arab community and hosted voter-registration booths, candidate forums and presidential-debate watch parties. According to Al-Dabbagh, more than 3,500 households participated in voting after registering through their campaign. "There are a lot of issues in the community," he says, "and I felt that those within the community were voiceless."

After Donald Trump's election, one of the President's first executive orders was to place a travel ban on Muslims. The council and Al-Dabbagh quickly took action with marches, town-hall meetings and calling local representatives via phone banks.

The ban was eventually affirmed by the Supreme Court. But the council and Al-Dabbagh didn't stop looking for ways to offer supportive environments and projects to help immigrants and refugees. "One of the projects we worked on was the reference resource guide specific to the Los Angeles area," Al-Dabbagh says. The Refugees Welcome Guide gives information on resettlement, what people need to do as soon as they arrive in the United States, and where to go when in need of health care, housing and food assistance.

Al-Dabbagh not only tries to get the elders of the Arab American community involved, but he also focuses on keeping the youth interested in Orange County politics. The council even offers internship programs to foster future leaders; those who apply are assured they will not be turned away or judged based on religious identity, background or political party.

The council also "took the lead on getting April [marked] as Arab American Heritage Month," Al-Dabbagh says. "And we got the state of California to claim it as so." More than 100 proclamations were issued by the Orange County Board of Supervisors, the Anaheim Union High School District, California's state Senate, the Fullerton City Council and many others.

Al-Dabbagh believes helping those in the Arab American community, as well as sharing knowledge with others, is an ongoing project. "We want to change out part of the narrative of who people think Arabs are," he says. "We want our history to be recognized and to be talked about in a positive light."

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MICHAEL ZIOBROWSKI

FIGHTER FOR TRANS YOUTH

PRIYA SHAH

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

Professor Priya Shah became the pupil when lecturing during a gender-studies course at UC Irvine a decade ago. A trio of students approached her with LGBT Center letters in hand, asking her to use different names for them than those on the roll sheet. "What I didn't understand was why that was so urgent or why other professors were saying no," Shah recalls.

But that came with time.

Raised in San Ramon, Shah moved to Orange County to attend UCI herself, and she completed all her degrees there, earning a doctorate in 2008. Shah then taught at UCI, where she met the young activists who taught her everything about queer theory. One student stood out in particular: Christien "Glitch" Rodriguez, a gender queer undergrad who transitioned during the time they forged a friendship. But he took a leave from UCI in the fall of 2012, just a few credits shy of graduating.

And then, on March 8, 2013, Rodriguez flung himself from the Social Science parking structure. His suicide sent shockwaves through the campus. "What a loss," Shah says. "This young, brilliant life cut short."

Shortly after, she came across an article in *Guernica* magazine that placed trans life expectancy at 23, a benchmark Rodriguez missed by a year. Shah's grief morphed into resolve. "It's not up to cisgender people to identify the movement, but we can't be on the sidelines," she says. Shah wanted to do everything she could to prevent another such tragedy—only she didn't know her biggest fight would also be closest to home.

One morning, Nicole, her firstborn child who was assigned male at birth, walked toward her with something urgent to say: "Mom! I'm a girl."

The revelation didn't come as a total surprise; Nicole told her parents as much in other ways before her seventh birthday. "Because of what happened to Christien, I was so scared of what it meant," Shah admits. "As a parent, you never want your children to struggle, to suffer. What we came to realize [was that] by not acknowledging it, that suffering would be so much more profound."

The family found a therapist to help with Nicole's transition. But classmates bullied her at Heritage Oak in Yorba Linda, and administrators wouldn't recognize her transition—from preferred pronouns to school uniforms—in any meaningful way. And then, Nicole admitted to suicidal thoughts. "I didn't send her back to school after that," Shah recalls.

Instead, the family sued the private school, using Nicole's full name in the complaint. The suit settled quietly last year; Shah can only state that both parties are content with the terms. But a quick look at the school's website shows an updated anti-discrimination and bullying policy that now includes "gender identity" and "gender expression" protections.

Nicole, now 9, enjoyed a fairly tranquil third-grade year at her new public school, but the fight for trans rights continues. When not teaching gender and queer studies at Saddleback College and Cal State Fullerton, Shah is creating community. Last year, she organized "Our Stories OC," an alternative book fair for youth in Yorba Linda that highlighted stories about autistic, refugee and LGBT kiddos. "Actually, that's the work I love the most," Shah says. "I hated the legal battle."

It's a small step in the creation of an inclusive world for all children, including her own.

"My dreams for both my daughters are the same, and that's part of my dream for Nicole," Shah says after a pensive pause. "I just want for them to take on the world but be secure in who they are wherever that takes them. I want that for every child."

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COURTESY FRANCESCA POLLETTA

PROFESSOR BASEBALL

EDWIN AMENTA

BY MATT COKER

Edwin Amenta loves baseball. He loves watching it, reading about it, writing about it, railing against it and especially playing its bastard cousin, softball. He blogs about baseball and has written articles and a book on the sport (with another on the way), the nation's pastime has even entered his research and course offerings as a UC Irvine sociology professor.

An article in an American Sociological Society publication, "Softball and the Social Scientist"—which was excerpted from Amenta's book *Professor Baseball Searching for Redemption and the Perfect Lineup on the Softball Diamonds of Central Park* (University of Chicago Press, 2007)—includes an editor's note that describes the author as an "aging and undersized sociologist" who "was placed in charge of his doormat New York City softball team."

Born in Chicago, he rooted for the Cubs and White Sox, although harder for the Sox despite having seen far more Cubbies games because he lived near Wrigley Field. Amenta began playing at a very young age. "When I was growing up, there was all manner of pickup games," he says. "I played more with the neighborhood kids than in organized ball. In organized ball, I had the distinction of literally going a season with no hits."

He quit playing hardball by high school and joined softball teams, having filled out by then, he discovered he could actually play. *Professor Baseball* colorfully chronicles his dirtbagger "career," and his passion is reflected in the collection of T-shirts from adult league teams he has toiled with across the country.

After getting his undergraduate and master's degrees at Indiana University and his doctorate at the University of Chicago, Amenta went to New York University for his first academic position. He and his wife and fellow sociology professor, Francesca Polletta, found the Big Apple invigorating—until their twins, Gregory and Louisa, arrived 15 years ago. A brutally cold month in New York, during which the young family could only go outside four times, convinced the couple to jump at dual offers from UC Irvine.

They moved here in 2005, which was the same year the White Sox won their third World Series. Chicago's previous championships had been in 1917 and 1906. "Everyone I had known in New York had been razzing me for a decade," Amenta recalls. "I could finally say, 'In your face,' but I was meeting all new people in Irvine [who had] no idea about the White Sox's struggles."

One UCI class he teaches is Baseball in Society, which marries sociological theory with the history of the game. Because the class fulfills an upper-division writing requirement, it is popular with students, including Anteater baseball players. "They are good to have in class because, otherwise, there will often be kids with no idea what baseball is," Amenta says. "The players are very good at explaining the inside aspects of baseball. They are very conscientious students. It's funny, there was a kid in my office one day talking about his outline. The next day, he was signing a six-figure bonus."

The working title for Amenta's next book is *How Moneyball Broke Baseball*, which argues the statistics-heavy approach to building lineups ultimately screws Major League Baseball fans, players and the game he loves. (Read more about it on his blog: profbaseball.wordpress.com.) "There are longer and longer games that are less exciting because there is less action. Players are not putting pitches in play. Strikeouts have skyrocketed. Home runs are up, but runs haven't increased. Players just trot the bases because of the emphasis on the home run. More players are beer-gutted; they look like they are in an adult softball league rather than the athletes of other sports such as football, soccer and basketball." Worst of all: "tanking," or teams losing on purpose. "They put out inferior teams and lose a lot of games because they can actually make money if they lower the payroll enough."

No such payroll issues face Fast Fatigables, Amenta's softball team formed by UCI biomechanical engineers. While in New York for a sabbatical fellowship, he walked on to join Team King Kong of the Broadway-show league. But, he vows, "I will come back to Irvine triumphant at the end of June in my King Kong shirt."

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MICHAEL ZIDEKOWSKI

THE HUNGER RELIEVER

ALLISON CUFF

BY LILA SHAKTI

While at work, Allison Cuff doesn't sit down. The 38-year-old restocks shelves, takes phone calls, and answers questions from students and staff, simultaneously and tirelessly, Monday through Friday.

Lines form daily outside Pirate's Cove, the food pantry located on the campus of Orange Coast College in Costa Mesa. Serving more than 300 students per week, Cuff and her staff ensure that everyone who comes there is helped—even if that person has no student identification. No one is turned away.

Cuff has been overseeing Pirate's Cove since its inception. Tucked into a small closet off an elevator with a small refrigerator, the operation was originally limited in what could be offered and able to serve about 15 students per week. But thanks to demand, it moved into a larger building. "The refrigerator was so small in the previous building, we weren't able to provide more than boxed and canned goods," she says. "We are able to feed so many more people now, and we can offer them fresh produce."

As Cuff sought donations from local food bank Second Harvest, she realized what was supposed to last a week was only sufficient for one day. With the needs of students experiencing food insecurity much higher than she thought, she turned to other charities, organizations and grants. Assisting her in this mission is full-time, unpaid volunteer Steve Parker.

Food deserts are not limited to rural areas. Rising rents and the cost of living in Orange County are major factors for students who struggle to have enough to eat. But people of all ethnicities, ages and backgrounds are welcome at Pirate's Cove for a snack, a salad or food for the week.

In addition to fresh fruits and vegetables, students can find everyday necessities (which can mean the difference between coming to school and not) such as shaving cream, razors, soap, shampoo and conditioner, even tampons and diapers. And most days, students can get a colorful bunch of flowers left over from Trader Joe's.

Though there's often a stigma attached to the people who utilize food banks, Cuff greets everyone with a nonjudgmental smile. She previously worked for four and a half years in OCC's CalWorks department, helping students apply for food stamps.

Cuff perhaps understands the struggles of OCC's student population better than others, as she is in the same demographic as the people she serves. The single mother of three children knows firsthand what it's like to go to school, work, raise kids and still not have enough. Though she cannot support herself with her income from the food pantry, she tries to balance her reality with her passion.

"I don't sleep, but I love what I do," Cuff says. "Taking care of the employees who work here is critical to the success of Pirate's Cove."

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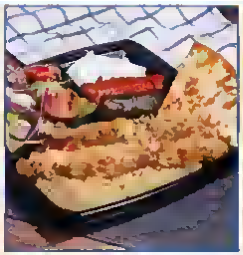

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MICHAEL ZIGROWSKI

THE VLOGSMITH

GIL RAMIREZ

BY PAT RICE MARSTERS

"Don't fuck me, Gil."

It sounds like a terrible thing to say, but it's meant as a term of endearment, insists Gil Ramirez.

Legend has it, the phrase was first uttered by Marisha Ray on *Critical Role*. She was using the hand-forged 20-sided die given to her and the other voice actors who gather to play *Dungeons & Dragons* for the web series by the Lake Forest-based blacksmith.

"I have no idea why she would say it," Ramirez concedes. "She would only say it when the die roll was poor. . . . It just became a thing to say."

It also brought him some fame . . . all thanks to something that started as a personal project.

At the age of 13, Ramirez decided he wanted to make a knife. With no experience or proper tools, he took a ball-peen hammer to some poor-grade steel, using a small block of mild-grade steel as an anvil. "I tested the knife on a tree," he says with a laugh. "The tree won."

In college, he gained a few more experience points when he took a class on jewelry making. "I wanted to learn metals better: copper, silver, gold," Ramirez says.

One day, he asked a teacher about the forge he found in the very back of the school. "He said, 'Don't make any knives,'" Ramirez recalls. "So, the first thing I made was a, um, letter opener. But it was really a knife."

He made more pieces over the semester, finishing with a 7-foot sword that he planned to enter into a show at an art gallery. He placed it into a giant shipping tube to protect and transport it, but as he walked across campus, the sword slipped out, loudly clanging as it hit the concrete. "The dean came down and put a stop to it," he says. "He didn't allow the piece to be displayed."

The incident left Ramirez discouraged, but then he started on a new path, learning from the renowned David Burnett. "He's a really great artist and master bladesmith," Ramirez says. But they parted ways when Burnett moved to Hawaii. "That left me in a void."

Armed with experience and the knowledge of a master, Ramirez journeyed to the Heritage Museum of Orange County, where the late Bob Cooper managed the forge. Soon, Ramirez was volunteering his time teaching and blacksmithing.

"I challenge myself perpetually," he says, so of course he began looking for new things to create. He would upload videos of his projects on YouTube as Gil the Vlogsmith, but one went viral: forging a D20 die. "I had no idea it would be so popular," says Ramirez.

Soon, influential members of the *D&D* community noticed, including the casts of *Critical Role* and *Geek and Sundry*. He has now appeared on both shows, talking about games and his unusual D20s. Fans began to reach out, wanting their own.

Demand was so high he knew he needed to open his own shop. Ramirez went on a quest to find his own place. To finance his dream, he turned to Kickstarter, offering dice in copper, silver, gold, even titanium, which, he says, "is one of the hardest to work with." Within 24 hours, his project was fully funded. Stretch goals were added and met, with a total $110,295 raised.

"Finding a shop space was the longest ordeal of my life," he says. But on April 1, he posted on Facebook the good news: He had acquired the keys to a spot. Since then, he has been busy filling it with equipment so he can bust out those Kickstarter rewards—as well as some new projects.

In addition to his blacksmithing work, he has become known for his storytelling abilities in the *D&D* world. As a teen, friends would tap him to be their Dungeon Master. "I had lots of people asking," he says. "If five people were interested, then I'd write one out."

As the game gained popularity in recent years, he and his wife, Kristin Potter-Ramirez, started a weekly game broadcast via Twitch, *Triangle Table*, with friends Katarina Waters (who wrestles professionally as Winter), Adam Gold, Amber Milazzo and Guillermo Dorado. Though the show is currently on hiatus, he's looking forward to starting it back up soon.

In addition to getting a good look at those custom dice, maybe you'll hear someone mutter endearingly, "Damn it, Gil."

PMARSTERS@OCWEEKLY.COM

MICHAEL ZIBROWSKI

POETIC INFLUENCER

MARILYNN MONTAÑO

BY AIMEE MURILLO

Young poet Marilynn Montaño has been actively supporting and nurturing other local writers in her vicinity since starting as an adviser for Barrio Writers at the age of 18. She currently hosts writing and poetry workshops around Santa Ana, including *Mi Palobra*, *Mi Communidad*, a workshop series she founded that guides novice writers into journaling self-affirmations on paper. She also facilitates workshops at Crear Studio, a gathering space for those who want to practice their art with a creative mind hive or learn new art skills. And she holds poetry readings and open mics at the cozy bookstore LibroMobile.

Montaño's work can be found in numerous Barrio Writers publications as well as the grassroots *Seeds of Resistance Flor y Canto* zine, which publishes poetry by women of color based in Santa Ana, and the anthology book *Los Angeles Water Works–Histories of Water and Place*. She also contributes to the online magazine for Veggie y Que, a plant-based vegan restaurant in Whittier, and she won an Orange County Press Club award as co-author of a story on housing security in Orange County. Plus, she was a featured poet on *PBS NewsHour*. Her latest literary release is the zine *Roots*, a self-published collection of personal poetry that honors her background and family life.

The self-professed Chicana balances her workshop planning with her day job as a barista at the DTSA-based Coffee Muse, and she helps with social media at LibroMobile. But poetry is where she processes emotions and observations, and many of her poems touch on themes such as gentrification, identity and respect for her working-class parents.

Raised in Santa Ana, Montaño recalls her immigrant parents moving their entire family from room to room across various parts of the city. It wasn't until high school that she began to reflect on her parents' struggle to apply for citizenship papers, which led to her writing about it. She officially started penning poetry at age 15 and spent after-school hours and summers at the Teen Space at Newhope Library. There, she saw an advert for a week-long writing intensive for teens called Barrio Writers. Montaño was intrigued; she decided to put aside her shyness and attend.

Helmed by Sarah Rafael García, the workshops introduced Montaño to writers of color and gave her a boldness she had never known before. "I was a writer, but I didn't feel confident enough [to call myself] a writer," Montaño explains. "But when I entered Barrio Writers and participated in the program, I felt this drive, and little by little, my shyness was going away, and I was still working through it." Years later, García offered Montaño a position as an adviser to help other youths. Though she was initially taken aback, Montaño now looks back at it as prophetic. "I didn't know back then [that opportunity] was going to lead to where I'm at now, where I host workshops," Montaño says. "Adults don't just offer that to young teens."

Another formative experience for Montaño was volunteering at local organizing spaces and community centers such as Latino Health Access and El Centro Cultural de Mexico. Although she says she loved the work and activism the latter group championed and learned a great deal about organizing, interpersonal drama and ageism, as well as misogyny, drove Montaño away. This led to a period of depression, which she slowly worked through by starting a new job as a barista at her favorite café, Calacas (now Cafe Cultura). She began her *Mi Palabro* workshops series in the fall of 2018 and regained her self-confidence through helping others.

Montaño is now putting together a full-length manuscript of poems and applying for an arts and culture grant so she can hold more *Mi Palabro* workshops, and she continues to write in the wee hours of the night. "I still want to keep doing poetry till I die and find ways for other people to incorporate poetry in their lives," Montaño says. "After [every] workshop I do, we build a writing community among one another."

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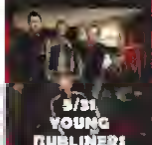
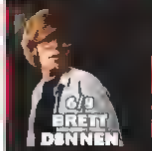

5/31 YOUNG DUBLINERS

6/7 ASIA ft. John Payne


6/9 BRETT DENNEN

6/11 JOHN PAUL WHITE

6/14 GARY NOEY

5/23	PUDDLES PITY PARTY
5/24	OINGO BOINGO FORMER MEMBERS
5/25	BENEFIT FOR DICK DALE
5/26	BLIND MELON
5/30	LITTLE RIVER BAND
5/31	YOUNG DUBLINERS
6/1	DESPERADO (Eagles Tribute)
6/2	SERPENTINE FIRE (Earth, Wind and Fire Tribute)
6/7	ASIA FT. JOHN PAYNE
6/8	BRETT DENNEN
6/11	88 5 Presents JOHN PAUL WHITE (and his band)
6/14	GARY NOEY
6/15	DSR (Journey Tribute)
6/16	BEE GEES GOLD
6/20	CRYSTAL ROWERSOX
6/21	CASH'D OUT
6/22	Y&T
6/23	An Evening with JONN NIATT
6/28	KDZMIC RLUES (JANIS JDPLIN Tribute)
6/28	TNE CNAIRMAN and TNE RDARD (Rat Pack Tribute)
7/3	THE WAILERS
T/5	MICKY OOLENZ
T/8	REATLES vs STONES
T/12	TNE PETTY BREAKERS
T/13	LOS LONELY BDYS
T/18	JEFFERSON STARSNIP
7/18	NENRY KAPONO
T/20	NINDER
T/23	TED NUGENT
7/24	TED NUGENT
T/27	SKELETON CREW (Grateful Dead Tribute)
T/28	STRUNZ and FARAN
8/1	JAMES MCMURTRY
8/3	NONK
8/7	TNE BACON BROTNERS
8/9	SURLIMED
8/15	TNE PLATTERS w/ special guest TNE DRIFTERS
8/16	TNE FARULOUS TNUNDERRIRDS
8/21	JUSTIN NAYWARD
8/28	SAVOY BROWN

7/20 HINDER

6/7 THE BACON BROTHERS

8/30 TOM KEIFER

9/5 SINBAD

9/15 SCOTT STAPP of CREED

10/5 GEOFF TATE'S Operation Mindcrime

UPCOMING SHOWS

8/30	CINDERELLA'S TOM KEIFER	10/5	GEOFF TATE'S OPERATION: MINDCRIME
9/31	WILD CNILD (The Doors Tribute)	10/6	DON MCLEAN
9/6	SINBAD	10/11	DOKKEN
9/8	DLENN MILLER ORCHESTRA	10/13	JUDY COLLINS
9/12	ADRIAN BELEW	10/24	TAB BENOIT
9/14	LED ZEPADAIN (Led Zeppelin Tribute)	11/1	OINDO BOINGO FORMER MEMBERS
9/15	Scott Stapp of Creed	11/2	TYRONE WELLS - The Lift Me Up Tour
9/20	NERMAN'S HERMITS	11/8	SUPER DIAMOND
9/21	HERMAN'S HERMITS	11/10	DAVID WILCOX
9/22	GARY PUCKETT	12/7	BLUE OYSTER CULT
9/27	QUEEN NATION	12/21	AMBROSIA
9/28	QUEEN NATION	12/22	David Benoit CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS
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THE PARTY MAKER

JOHN HAMPTON

BY NATE JACKSON

For as long as John Hampton can remember, he's been the center of the party. Not the guy hanging from the chandelier swigging from a champagne bottle (well, sometimes), but rather he's the guy tasked with bringing a party to life. Via his company, Hampton Productions, he has thrown events and concerts throughout Orange County over the past 15 years.

People who came of age during the mid-2000s may remember the days when clubs and bars were a bastion for more than ticket sales for touring artists; they fostered a community and championed bands in our own back yard, elevating them high enough to get a shot at breakout success. "Seeing all the bands grow—like the Dirty Heads going from playing gigs on Main Street in Huntington Beach to what they are today—that really pushed me to support these bands," Hampton says. "We've lost a little bit of that over the years, so I wanna bring that back."

Though the talent has always been here, it requires someone special to give it a platform that can make everyone feel good about shelling out cash to see local music. And Hampton continues to cultivate the deep roots in OC by working with brands such as Wahoo's Fish Taco, co-owned by local entrepreneur Wing Lam, and Tony Hawk's skateboard company, Birdhouse. Having been involved with both brands since the '90s, Hampton has seen the grassroots companies grow into big-time corporations in their respective arenas.

That same scrappy work ethic built on community and friendships has seen Hampton expand his own events, including the OC music showcase, dubbed OCSX. After years of producing events in Austin, Texas, for other companies, he decided to use his skills to shed light on OC's music scene. In 2015, Hampton began bringing local bands there for shows orbiting the annual South By Southwest. "It was at a time when OC Music Awards halted, too, and that was a really good platform for people to get together and communicate and see who was doing what," Hampton says. "It was really a good vibe."

Bringing such bands as Robert Jon & the Wreck, Big Monsta, and Well Hung Heart to the attention of an international audience at SXSW required corporate sponsorships, arranging places for the band members to stay, and driving countless miles so OC artists could melt the faces off unsuspecting fans.

But Hampton's many efforts mostly focus on OC. With the support of his team, he organizes, promotes and markets boutique festivals all over the county—and Hampton doesn't limit himself to the beer-swigging rock & roll crowds.

One of his largest events to date started with the idea to throw a "Baby-Coachella" at the Great Park in Irvine. Imagine a DJ pumping out EDM replaced by a bubble tent or a DoLab morphing into an arts-and-crafts station for kids. In its first year, the proposed pint-sized festival drew more than 10,000 families. It got so big they had to change the name to Dream Feather so as to not anger the Coachella gods. (The next such event is being planned for later this year.)

Hampton's strategy is to pair local corporations with the arts-and-entertainment community in putting on memorable, well-run music events carrying the soul of a live music scene.

"It's all about putting forth the effort," Hampton says. "Everybody wants to be inspired and believed in, and if you can believe in someone and they believe in you, you can accomplish a lot of things. That's what we're trying to do."

NJACKSON@OCWEEKLY.COM

COURTESY RYAN RIFFE

MUSIC MAN

BIFF COOPER

BY STEVE DONOFRIO

Nestled in an unsuspecting San Clemente shopping center is the epicenter of South County's burgeoning music scene. Power Plant Records. An all-in-one record store, recording studio and music academy, Biff Cooper's shop has essentially evolved into what he calls "a community center for artists."

Power Plant Records is much more than the average record store, which is what Cooper always intended. "The vision for the layout was [for it] to be kind of like Motowo Records," he explains. "They had studios at the back of the shop that were separated by windows. So potentially, there could be three different recording artists in there, and you could see them all working while you were just looking through the shop." Indeed, on any given day at Power Plant, it's likely you'll see some learning, teaching, writing, recording or producing going on.

Cooper—a lifelong South County resident, musician, sound engineer and all-around music aficionado—admits that much of the inspiration for the shop's "community vibe" came from an unlikely source: Johnny Winter. The Texas blues legend, who was scheduled to play a gig down the street at the Coach House in San Juan Capistrano, sent his manager into the shop to talk to Cooper. "He said that when Johnny was a kid, his mom would just drop him off at the local record store when she went to work," Cooper recalls. "So he was just hanging out there, meeting different types of people and listening to all kinds of music. He said that if it weren't for the record store, Johnny wouldn't have become a musician and that the music industry is different because those types of hubs don't exist for people to congregate at anymore. It's kind of like holy ground."

One can't help but imagine how proud Winter would be if he stepped into Power Plant today. With more than 150 students, an eclectic roster of recording artists and seemingly endless opportunities for musicians to network, the shop has garnered a culture all its own. Since it seems to be the go-to recording spot for all genres, it'd be difficult to find a South County artist who hasn't been there. Among the most notable groups to come through Power Plant are the Flytraps. "Their *Sunset Strip R.I.P.* album was recorded, mixed, and mastered here," Cooper says. "One of those songs made it onto a Marvel TV show, so that was pretty cool."

He also organized an "Artist Networking" clipboard inside the shop and on its social media pages, so musicians could exchange contact information and connect with one another to collaborate. This act of community engagement led to the predominantly rock-oriented Power Plant attracting hip-hop artists. "That's how we got hooked up with these hip-hop guys, they love vinyl and cassettes," Cooper says. "So we started veering a little bit more into that arena." Cooper has been not only recording some of these artists, but also working on music videos with them.

Cooper is so much more than a record-store owner. He's a visionary who isn't afraid of growth and change. Having found that music lessons are the most lucrative aspect of Power Plant, he hopes to share that strategy. "We want to help record stores stay open," Cooper says. "So our dream is ... to open up more locations for lessons in the back of other record stores."

*calendar

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[FESTIVALS]

Jam On!

OC Music Festival

Woodstock, shmoodstock! You don't have to leave the county to experience a weekend of peace, love and music. One of Orange County's best homegrown events returns to Silverado, bringing good vibes to music-lovers. From Friday to Monday, the OC Music Festival's two stages will host 20 jam bands, including Cubensis, Pink Talking Fish, Shred Is Dead (featuring Marcus Rezak), GrooveSession, Jerry's Middle Finger, Robert Jon & the Wreck, and the Higgs. Come for one day or for the whole holiday weekend, as camping at the adjacent campground can ensure the party never ends!

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OC Music Festival at Silverado Canyon, 5305 E. Santiago Canyon Rd., Silverado, (949) 716-8891, www.oc-musicfest.com. 5 p.m., also Sat.-Sun. $89-$298, 12 and younger, free. —SCOTT FEINBLATT

[FOOD & DRINK]

Drunk in Westeros

Game of Thrones-Inspired Beer Festival

Since you *Game of Thrones* fans can't seem to stop opining about the fates and character developments of some of George R.R. Martin's fantastical adapted television show, you might as well do it over some fine libations. More than 20 craft beers and cocktails inspired by the series will be offered as samples, so bring your fellow fans and drinkers to imbibe until you forget how upset you were at the Red Wedding. Photo opportunities atop a makeshift iron throne will be aplenty, while GoT-inspired bands the Targaryen Sisters and the Westeros Party Band will play on. Cosplayers dressed as familiar characters from the show will make a special appearance as well at this immersive, boozy gathering.

Game of Thrones-Inspired Beer Festival at Castle Black, 501 N. Harbor Blvd., Fullerton, www.facebook.com/rockstarbeer. 6:30 p.m. $39. 21+. —AIMEE MURILLO

sat/05/25

[FLOAT TRIPS]

OUT OF THIS WORLD

Space Yacht Boat Party

The name says it all, doesn't it? Wicked Delight presents an extraterrestrial-themed party cruise to revel in this Memorial Day weekend. Sail across the beautiful Southern California waters with rave-y DJs on two stages. Libations and refreshments will likely be aplenty, and for four hours, you'll believe you're partying where no one has partied before. All that's left to worry about is what you'll wear. Will you be a sexy alien? Or perhaps a scantily clad Spock, or a rave version of a Romulan? Feel the fantasy as you blast off into an afternoon of mayhem and magic.

Space Yacht Boat Party Cruises at Catalina Cruises, 1046 Queens Hwy., Long Beach, (310) 384-3789, www.eventbrite.com. 4 p.m. $45. 21+. —AIMEE MURILLO

[CONCERT]

One for the Books

Dead Boys and Mink Daggers

The lineup for tonight's show is wondrously epic, from '70s rockers Dead Boys to SoCal outfit the Side Eyes, fronted by the ferocious Astrid McDonald. Dead Boys are, thankfully, not dead, as they've been performing and recording well past the loss of their most famous vocalist, Stiv Bators, for years. With new and original band members in tow, the band will bring the young, loud and snotty attitude you know and love with the exciting punk tunes to back it. Joining them on the bill are Mink Daggers, a well-known Long Beach-by-way-of-Port City rock & roll band ready to electrify audiences with their surfy, high-energy punk. Local duo Nico Bones offer their low-fi trash punk, as well.

Dead Boys, Mink Daggers, the Side Eyes and Nico Bones at Alex's Bar, 2913 E. Anaheim Blvd., Long Beach, (562) 434-8292, www.alexsbar.com. 8 p.m. $15. 21+. —AIMEE MURILLO

sun/05/26

[FESTIVALS]

Sweet Spot!

Garden Grove Strawberry Festival

Witness or perhaps enter your kid in the Berry Berry Beautiful Baby Pageant, one of many old-timey regional-agricultural-fair activities celebrating the delicious species of the genus *Fragaria*, which are still grown on small parcels throughout the county. With carnival rides, live music, karaoke and vendors, this fruitful civic wingding helps fund worthwhile charitable projects—as if you needed a reason to eat strawberry shortcake. Check out the complete schedule, including a 5k run and parade featuring Grand Marshal Dawn Wells, who played the kittenish ingenue Mary Ann on *Gilligan's Island*.

Garden Grove Strawberry Festival at Euclid and Main Street, Garden Grove, (714) 638-0981, strawberryfestival.org. 10 a.m., also Fri.-Sat. & Mon. Free. —ANDREW TONKOVICH

[THEATER]

Relatable Humor

Tigers Be Still

Brought to you by *New Girl* writer Kim Rosenstock, this quirky production follows millennial, art-therapy MFA graduate Sherry Wickman and her earnest efforts to find a job in her field. While working toward being employable, Sherry manages her mother and sister's emotional drama as they deal with heartbreak and depression in darkly humorous and relatable ways (i.e., binge-watching *Top Gun* and lying on the couch for hours—been there, done that!) Despite the myriad of disappointments, existential conundrums and generational frustrations it presents, *Tigers Be Still* brings home a triumphant heroine who navigates her world with humor and grace to relieve others going through the same.

Tigers Be Still at Chance Theater, 5522 La Palma Ave., Anaheim, (888) 455-4212, chancetheater.com. 2:45 p.m. Through June 2. $20-$39. —AIMEE MURILLO

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mon/05/27

[CONCERT]

A Little Bit Country

Supersuckers

It could well be argued that Supersuckers did the impossible and got legions of punk fans into country music. Part of the Sub Pop label, the flannel-wearing, Stetson-donning quartet have bucked trends and crossed genres so well they've inspired listeners to sport bolo ties and cowboy hats. Okay, that last part is a bit of a stretch, but Supersuckers' potent combo of country ballads and raucous bangers will still leave you scratching your head at how to categorize them. See the band in action tonight at the Wayfarer—no cowboy hat required for entry.

Supersuckers with Speedealer and Alright Spider at the Wayfarer, 843 W. 19th St., Costa Mesa, (949) 764-0039, wayfarercm.com. 7 p.m. $15. 21+. —AIMEE MURILLO

tue/05/28

[CONCERT]

Enjoy Yourself

The Specials

It's hard to believe the Specials have been around for 40 years. Despite the revolving door of musicians who have played in the British band, Terry Hall, Horace Panter and Lynval Golding remain from their formative years. And their most recent record, *Encore*, their first with Hall since 1980, landed at No. 1 on the U.K. album charts. Fresh off a headlining gig at Punk Rock Bowling in Las Vegas, the very un-punk-rock ska outfit stop at the House of Blues tonight as part of their latest tour.

The Specials at the House of Blues at Anaheim GardenWalk, 400 W. Disney Way, Ste. 337, Anaheim, (714) 778-2583, www.houseofblues.com/anaheim. 7 p.m. $40. All ages. —WYOMING REYNOLDS

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wed/05/29

[COMEDY]

CULTURED COMEDY

Joel Kim Booster

Actor/comedian Joel Kim Booster has had an interesting ascent to comedic prominance in the past few years thanks to appearances on *The Late Late Show With James Corden* and *Conan* and the release of his Comedy Central Presents special. Booster, who is of South Korean descent and was adopted by white parents at birth, has a lot to say about the topic of race, but his standup is based on a variety of subject matters, from his gay identity to his deep love of cats. Tonight, he'll unleash his refreshing brand of humor in Irvine as he continues being one of America's most exciting comics to watch.

Joel Kim Booster at the Irvine Improv, 527 Spectrum Center Dr., Irvine, (949) 854-5455, improv.com/irvine. 8 p.m. $15. 18+. —AIMEE MURILLO

[FOOD & DRINK]

East Village Feast

Taste of Downtown Long Beach: East Village

Long Beach offers seemingly endless options when it comes to restaurants. So this two-day tasting fest is perfect for locals who just *can't* decide which cool new spot to try out today. The first of three Taste of Downtown Long Beach events held in different areas through the summer, this feast focuses on the East Village Arts District (Linden Avenue and First Street, specifically), with dozens of restaurants shelling out samplings of their best menu items and drinks. And for as little as $1 per dish (buy your food tickets ahead of time online for early-bird discounts), you can pretty much eat your way through the entire neighborhood on the cheap.

Taste of Downtown Long Beach: East Village at East Village Arts District on First Street and Linden Avenue, Long Beach, www.facebook.com/downtownlongbeach. 6 p.m.; also Thurs., May 30. Free, tasting tickets, $40. —ERIN DEWITT

thu/05/30

[CONCERT]

Teenagers at Heart

The Undertones

For many, the Undertones will always be cherished for their brand of brash pop-punk (see their seminal "Teenage Kicks"). Hailing from Derry, Ireland, the group helped to pave the way for the New Wave genre to blossom, with their more upbeat power-pop stylings appealing to both commercial and non-mainstream audiences. After reuniting in 1999, the Undertones have continued to bring their catchy hooks and frenetic energy to new material and performances around the globe. Tonight's crowd is in for an exceptional concert experience, but expect to hear the aforementioned fan favorite during the encore.

The Undertones at the Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600, www.observatoryoc.com. 8 p.m. $18. All ages. —AIMEE MURILLO

[PERFORMING ARTS]

BODIES IN MOTION

What Will Have Been

Neo-circuses have taken over the realm once dominated by P.T. Barnum, and with the coming of wisdom, animals are being set free and humans have moved to center stage. Cirque du Soleil was the ignition point, most likely, and acrobatic artists such as Australia's contemporary circus company Circa offer sublime and haunting displays of interlocking bodies and virtuosic physical beauty that defy logic. Presented by visionary director Yaron Lifschitz with a live violinist onstage playing a fusion of Bach and electronica, the performers of *What Will Have Been* push boundaries and defy expectations with extreme physicality that borders on the surreal. Now's your chance to experience this exceptional ensemble of multitalented artists and find out what has set the festival circuit buzzing!

Santa Ana Sites Presents *What Will Have Been* at the Yost Theater, 307 N. Spurgeon St., Santa Ana, (888) 862-9573, www.santanasites.com. 8 p.m.; also May 31. $12-$25. —SR DAVIES

Hello, Gorgeous . . .

BY MATT COKER

COURTESY COLUMBIA PICTURES

The Biggest Little Farm. Two dreamers with a dog plan to bring harmony to their lives and the land. *Directors Cut Cinema at Regency Rancho Niguel, (949) 831-0446. Thurs., May 23, 12:15, 2:30, 4:50, 7:15 & 9:45 p.m. $9.50-$12.50.*

Trial by Fire. A bond forms between a Texas death-row inmate (Jack O'Connell) and a Houston mother of two (Laura Dern) fighting for his freedom. *Directors Cut Cinema at Regency Rancho Niguel, (949) 831-0446. Thurs., May 23, 1, 4, 7 & 9:50 p.m. $9.50-$12.50.*

Long Day's Journey Into Night. A solitary man (Huang Jue) in southwest China's Guizhou province is haunted by loss and regret. Presented in Mandarin with English subtitles. *Edwards University Town Center 6, (844) 462-7342. Thurs., May 23, 1:10, 4:15 & 7:30 p.m. $10.20-$13.25.*

Ask Dr. Ruth. The Holocaust survivor became America's most famous sex therapist. *Art Theatre; arttheatrelongbeach.org. Thurs., May 23, 1:30 & 6:30 p.m. $9-$12.*

Non-Fiction. Publisher Alain (Guillaume Canet) turning down Léonard's (Vincent Macaigne) latest manuscript complicates the relationship between the two and their significant others. *Edwards University Town Center 6 (844) 462-7342. Thurs., May 23, 1:20, 4:30 & 7:45 p.m. $10.20-$13.25, also at Directors Cut Cinema at Regency Rancho Niguel, (949) 831-0446. Thurs., May 23, 1:55, 5:10, 7:10 & 10 p.m. $9.50-$12.50.*

Shadow. Commander Yu (Deng Chao) uses a body double (also played by Chao) in a plot against Pei's king (Zheng Kai). Presented in Mandarin with English subtitles. *Edwards University Town Center 6, (844) 462-7342. Thurs., May 23, 1:30, 4:30 & 7:45 p.m. $10.20-$13.25.*

Brazil. A low-level, daydreaming bureaucrat (Jonathan Pryce) gets caught up in a scandal surrounding a typo that led to a man's death. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Thurs., May 23, 2:30, 5:30 & 8:30 p.m., Sat., 10 p.m. Sun., 1 & 4 p.m. $7-$10.50.*

Zarathustra, the Golden Star. What is billed as the first and most unbiased documentary on Zarathustra and the faith he founded in Iran is presented in seven parts. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Thurs. Sat., May 23-25. Visit the website for show times. $10.50.*

Bellingcat—Truth in a Post-Truth World. Bellingcat, the "citizen investigative journalist" collective, exposes the truth of impenetrable news stories around the globe. *OCMA Expand, ocmaexpand.org. Thurs., May 23, 7 p.m. Free, but limited first-come, first-served seating.*

The Cold Blue. Legendary Hollywood director William Wyler went to Europe in 1943 to document the air war in progress. *Various theaters; www.fathomevents.com. Thurs., May 23, 7:30 p.m. $15.*

Sly. A chap (Hamed Behdad) wants to become a member of parliament despite a reputation for recklessness and taking arbitrary action. *Starlight Cinema City, (714) 970-6700. Thurs., May 23, 7:30 & 9:55 p.m. Call theater for ticket prices.*

The Third Wife. A 14-year-old (Nguyen Phuong Tra My) becomes the third wife of a wealthy landowner (Long Le Vu) in 19th-century rural Vietnam. *Regency Westminster, (714) 893-4222. Fri. & Mon.-Thurs., May 30, 1:50, 4:25, 7 & 9:40 p.m., also Sat.-Sun., 11:05 a.m., 1:50, 4:25, 7 & 9:40 p.m. $6.50-$10.50.*

Homes for Gods and Mortals. Film scholar Gayatri Chatterjee explores the ways history and mythology mingle. *UC Irvine, (949) 824-6117. Fri., 2 p.m. Free.*

The Running Man. According to Paul Michael Glaser's 1987 sci-fi thriller, in 2019, we were supposed to have game shows on which losing contestants get public executions. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Fri., 7 p.m. $15.*

Belladonna of Sadness. A young woman acquires the power to exact revenge after being branded a witch and shunned. Presented in Japanese with English subtitles. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Fri.-Sun., 10 p.m. $15.*

Garry Winogrand: All Things Are Photographable. Sasha Waters Freyer's documentary is about the photographer who captured New York City in the 1960s before taking his lenses to Texas and Los Angeles. *Art Theatre, arttheatrelongbeach.org. Sat.-Mon., 11 a.m. $9-$12.*

The Rocky Horror Picture Show. Midnight insanity performs live. *Art Theatre; arttheatrelongbeach.org. Sat., 11:55 p.m. $9-$12.*

The Fisher King. A bond forms between a troubled shock jock (Jeff Bridges) and a homeless man (Robin Williams) who is on a mission to find the Holy Grail in New York. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Mon. Tues., 2:30, 5:30 & 8:30 p.m. $7-$10.50.*

The Texas Chainsaw Massacre. Given all the imitators that followed, you'd be forgiven for forgetting or being unaware of how unique this film, inspired by the Ed Gein murders, was in 1974. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Mon.-Tues., 2:30, 5:30, 8 & 10 p.m. $7-$10.50.*

The Goonies. A group of misfits seek pirate treasure to save their home. *Directors Cut Cinema at Regency Rancho Niguel, (949) 831-0446. Tues., 7:30 p.m. $8.*

Puzzleys. Four small-town Iranian IT students decide to start up a business and head to Tehran to find backing and experience. In Persian with English subtitles. A discussion, Q&A, and reception follow. *UC Irvine, (949) 824-6117. Wed., 6:30 p.m. Free, but RSVP required at bit.ly/2J2lha5.*

Funny Girl. Fanny Brice (Barbra Streisand) rose from being a Ziegfeld Girl in the early 1900s to one of the most famous entertainers of the era. *Starlight Cinema City, (714) 970-6700. Wed., 7 p.m. Call theater for ticket prices.*

Heartbreak Ridge. A hard-nosed, hard-living Marine gunnery sergeant (Clint Eastwood) takes command of a spoiled recon platoon with a bad attitude. *Regency South Coast Village, (714) 557-6701. Wed., 7:30 p.m. $9.*

The Icarus Line Must Die. Joe Cardamone essentially plays himself gigging, grappling with potential label deals and balancing his private life with his ambition. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Wed., 7:30 & 10 p.m., Thurs., May 30, 8 & 10 p.m. $7-$10.50.*

Once Upon a Superhero. Superhero Solar Flare (Adam Marcinowski) fell from the sun and landed in LA, where he has lost his powers and is now a homeless man. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Wed., 8 p.m. $7-$10.50.*

Transformers: The Last Knight. A deadly threat from Earth's history reappears, Optimus Prime and his creator meet, and Autobots and Decepticons hunt. *Fullerton Public Library, (714) 738-6327. Thurs., May 30, 1 p.m. Free.*

Watchmen: Director's Cut. Set in a 1985 America, where costumed superheroes are part of everyday life, masked vigilante Rorschach (Jackie Earle Haley) uncovers a plot to kill and discredit all past and present superheroes. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Thurs., May 30, 7 p.m. $15.*

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THURS. JUNE 13TH @ 7:15PM

This workshop is open to women only. We will covers tips and techniques for handjobs to deep throating. Learn how to combat common obstacles like manly odors, hairy undercarriages, to swallow or not, and a sensitive gag reflex. This is a 'hands on' class! We will be practicing with dildos (sorry, no real penises allowed). This is our most popular workshop and always sells out! Register early! Tickets are $20 each or bring a friend 2 for $30 when prepaid by 4/16/19. If tickets are available they will be $30 each on the day of the workshop.

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Hard Feelings

I keep running into the same issue with my best friend of five years. (She's also my maid of honor at my upcoming wedding.) We're both empaths, and we're both in therapy working on how to cope with that. I have severe anxiety that impacts my physical health, so one of the empath-related issues I'm working on is not following through with plans when I need to take time alone. My friend claims she understands this, but my actions severely impact her mood. The final straw came when she called me late this past Friday night—just once, with no subsequent voice mail, text message or follow-up call. On Monday morning, I sent her a text message asking how her weekend was and got an icy reply. Evidently, something happened to her on Friday, she called me for support, and my failure to return her call left her feeling very upset. I apologized for the accidental trigger and tried to lay down some protocols for reaching out in an emergency situation so I know it's urgent. She hasn't replied. I'm really frustrated. She has a lot of baggage around being shamed for being emotional, so I try to be careful to not invalidate her feelings, but I don't know if that's even making a difference. We've had several conflicts over the past year, always triggered by something I did or said, almost always accidentally, that caused her to "take a step back." She insists she understands I'm doing my best to be a good friend while also working through my own emotional shit. But I'm feeling increasingly like it's impossible to be a human being AND her friend. Until recently, I had zero emotional boundaries and made myself available to her at a moment's notice to help shoulder her emotional burden. But now that I'm trying to be more conservative with my abundance and take better care of myself, it seems like all I do is hurt her. What the fuck do I do? I've tried to be open-minded and patient with her dramatic mood swings, but she seems unable to give me the benefit of the doubt, which I always try to give her. This rocky ground between us is adding more stress to the whole wedding situation. (You're supposed to be able to rely on your maid of honor, right?) This thing we have is not sustainable as it is, although I love her deeply. Help me figure this out?

Emotions Making Personal Affection Too Hard

Being so attuned to other people's emotional states that you feel their pain—being an empath—sounds exhausting. But Lon Gottlieb, a psychotherapist in private practice, isn't convinced your empath superpowers are the problem here.

"EMPATH's moods seem overly dependent on what the other person does," said Gottlieb. "That's not being an empath." Most people are empathetic, which isn't the same as what these two are doing. They're drowning in each other's feelings. This is what pop culture might call codependency, and what in therapy we'd call an attachment issue."

From your letter, EMPATH, it sounds as if you might be ready to detach from your friend—you mentioned a final straw and described the relationship as not sustainable—and detaching would resolve this attachment issue.

"This feels less like a friendship and more like a psychodrama where they're each playing out their respective issues," said Gottlieb. "A friendship isn't about solving another person's emotional issues or being the container for them. It isn't about being devastated by another person's feelings or boundaries. It should be a mutually fulfilling relationship, not being co-therapists to each other. In a strong friendship, each person can handle her own emotions rather than relying on the friend to regulate them for her."

Gottlieb started writing an advice column because, unlike psychotherapists, advice columnists are supposed to tell people what to do. I'm guessing your therapist mostly asks questions and gently nudges, EMPATH, but since Gottlieb has her advice-columnist hat on today and not her psychotherapist hat, I asked her to tell you what to do.

"She should act more like a friend than a therapist/caretaker," said Gottlieb. "She shouldn't treat her friend or herself as if they're too fragile to handle basic communication or boundaries. And they should both be working out their issues with their respective therapists not with each other."

And if you decide to keep the woman in your life (and your wedding party), EMPATH, you'll both have to work on—*sigh*—your communication skills.

"Right now, they don't seem to know how to communicate directly with each other," said Gottlieb. "It's either an icy text or complaining to outside parties about each other. But when it comes to how they interact with each other, they're so careful—as if one or both might break if they simply said, 'Hey, I really care about you and I know sometimes you want to talk about stuff, but sometimes it feels like too much and maybe something you can talk to your therapist about.'"

I will be driving to New Orleans from Toronto. It's almost impossible to drive from Ontario to Louisiana without stopping for fuel/food/hotel in Ohio, Georgia or Alabama. But I want to boycott Handmaid states during my trip. Even then, I feel I have to check the news every day to see what state is next. Do you have any practical advice for me? Or should I just stay home until your democratic systems and your courts are fixed and your Electoral College is abolished?

Canadian Avoids Hearing Terrible Georgia, Ohio...

Why head south, CANTGO? Even if you've lived in Canada all your life, you couldn't possibly have explored every corner of your beautiful country. But if you absolutely, positively must board the *Titanic*—excuse me, if you must visit the United States—take a hard right after you cross the border and head west instead. Enjoy Michigan's Upper Peninsula, check out some of those lakes they're always talking about in Minnesota, speed through the Dakotas, Montana and the skinniest part of Idaho, and pretty soon, you'll be in Washington, where a woman's right to choose is enshrined in the state constitution. The summers are lovely, we've got hiking trails that will take you to mountain lakes, and Democrats control both houses of the state legislature and the governor's mansion, so you won't have to check the news every day when you're in Seattle.

CONFIDENTIAL TO EVERYONE. Anti-choice, anti-woman, anti-sex bills have been rammed through Republican-controlled state legislatures in Ohio, Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri, Arkansas, Utah, Mississippi and Alabama. "The new wave of anti-abortion laws suggests that a post-*Roe* America won't look like the country did before 1973, when the court case was decided," Michelle Goldberg wrote in *The New York Times*. "It will probably be worse." If these bills are declared constitutional—a real possibility now—doctors will be jailed, women who have miscarriages will be prosecuted, and many forms of birth control will be banned. If you're as pissed off as I am—and anyone who isn't can piss right off—please make sure you and all your friends are registered to vote so you can vote out anti-choice state legislators and governors in 2020. To be clear: Right now, abortion remains legal in all 50 states. So you don't have to wait until next November to send a "fuck you" to red-state Republicans pushing these laws. Make a donation to an organization that helps women obtain abortions in red states—such as The Yellowhammer Fund in Alabama (yellowhammerfund.org), Gateway Women's Access Fund in Missouri (gwaf.org) and Women Have Options in Ohio (womenhaveoptions.org).

SAVAGELOVE
» DAN SAVAGE

On the Lovecast *(savagelovecast.com), Dan chats with actor Maddie Corman. Contact Dan via mail@savagelove.net, follow him on Twitter @fakedanSavage, and visit ITMFA.org.*

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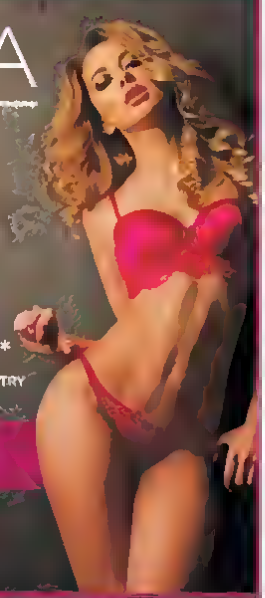

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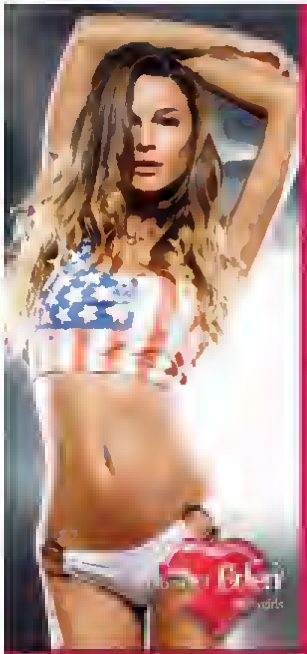

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» JEFFERSON VANBILLIARD

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The simple-to-use mechanics of Farm's Pax Era pods are suitable for novice smokers, but be warned: The hazy effects from this potent concentrate will leave even the heaviest of tokers in a daze. Equal parts Sour OG crossed with the Indica-heavy Hawaiian Haze, this phenotype is basically a tropical vacation for our lungs at $78 per half gram.

Farm's plant-to-pen approach to the current vape market has hit the shelves at one of our favorite dispensaries in Santa Ana, Blüm. Though we know life is rough living south of the 55 freeway, considering each city has decided to ignore its voters and refuse the sale of legal recreational cannabis, with Blüm's delivery option, you can fight the power without putting on pants.

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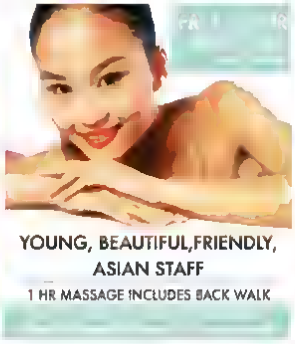

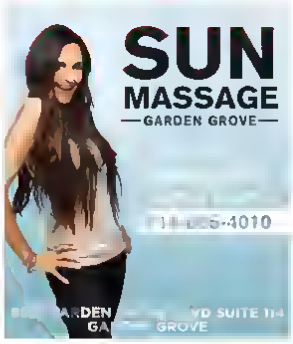

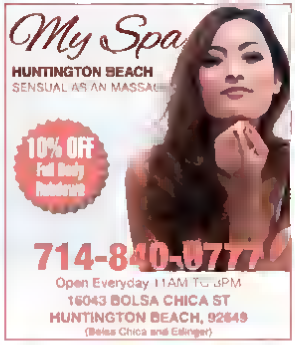

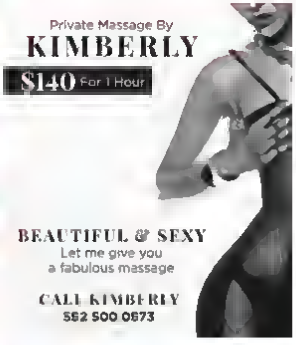

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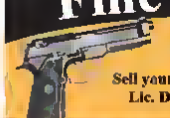
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BY JEFFERSON VANBILLIARD

If you've ever wondered if you have what it takes to make it in the cannabis industry, Nichole West has a harsh reality check for you.

You probably don't.

"One of the hardest parts of my job is telling someone who's spent everything they have on this idea that you can get rich from cannabis that they are wrong," West laments. "One of the worst ways to start a business is a shotgun marriage, where one person has money and the other has the product. The reality of what it takes to succeed in this business will end up kicking your ass."

West began honing her skills in the industry in 2009, when she opened her first medical dispensary in Long Beach. From there, she moved on to Colorado, where she helped to open Sweet Leaf, a medical/recreational location that provided legal cannabis to anyone age 21 or older. Unfortunately for her, as well as several other employees, the state had other plans. Serving a 30-day sentence for a Class 4 drug felony can make anyone rethink their current path, but West doesn't back down from a challenge.

After the dust had settled and her time had been served, West focused on creating and influencing everything she could in the realm of legal cannabis. From writing for several publications throughout Colorado and California to hosting workshops and classes that focus on the legal aspects of dispensary and brand ownership, she became an encyclopedia of knowledge.

These days, West has become a proverbial black belt in the art of "verbal judo" as her latest venture, Inclusive Cannabis, looks to set the industry straight when it comes to the thin profit margins most companies will eventually face. "Let's imagine I walk into a company that says they've got the ability to grow pounds of cannabis at a cost of $500," West says while taking a break from her jam-packed schedule. "I can look at their figures and know almost immediately whether or not that's a reality because, at the end of the day, the sad truth is that most of the people getting into our industry aren't prepared for the obstacles they're about to face. I've yet to see a grow operation that took the time to figure in the cost of bathroom supplies; things that seem so minor to us can end up costing you everything when you don't factor in the total cost of your product.

"A lot of companies try to do too many things, they start with an idea that they can just grow good cannabis and see a bit of success," she continues. "Next thing you know, they have an edible or a concentrate that they're trying to market, and the truth is that their product isn't great and they should have just kept growing flowers. Most of these businesses don't understand what a good investment is because they're looking at our community with dollar signs in their eyes."

To put it more bluntly (pardon the pun), "You aren't going to make drug-dealer money when you're doing things the legal way," West says.

So what's her advice to people who are looking to stake a claim in the cannabis industry? "Honestly, choosing your team wisely is the best decision you can make," she says. "Anyone can learn how to grow excellent weed, but what will set your business apart is the people you have in place to represent you."

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